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Viewing cable 06SOFIA215, SCENESETTER FOR BULGARIAN INTERIOR MINISTER

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- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06SOFIA215	2006-02-10 16:00	2011-08-30 01:44	SECRET	Embassy Sofia

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.bivol.bg/wlpetkovfountain.html>

<http://wlccentral.org/node/1772>

http://www.dnevnik.bg/bulgaria/2011/05/16/1090453_rumen_petkov_v_wikileaks_poddrujnik_na_amerikanskite/

http://www.pari.bg/article/2011/05/16/Wikileaks_Rumen_Petkov_zdravo_raboti_i_zdravo_pie

VZCZCXRO2961
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DE RUEHSF #0215/01 0411600
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1415
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RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAHLA/HOMELAND SECURITY CENTER WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUCNFB/FBI WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY 0122
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 SOFIA 000215

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FBI FOR OIO
DOD FOR OSD/POLICY (STRAUSS)
DOJ FOR OIA, OPDAT, AND AG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/10/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [KCRM](#) [KCOR](#) [BU](#)
SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR BULGARIAN INTERIOR MINISTER

PETKOV'S MEETINGS IN WASHINGTON

REF: A. 05 SOFIA 2054

1B. SOFIA 198

1C. 05 SOFIA 1618

1D. 05 SOFIA 1685

Classified By: DCM Jeffrey D. Levine, for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Interior Minister Rumen Petkov is one of the most influential personalities in the current government, and is almost certainly the one who evokes the strongest feelings among Bulgarians. Recent public opinion data shows him to be among the most popular public officials in the country, a first for an Interior Minister in post-Communist Bulgaria. On the other hand, many on the right side of the political spectrum view Petkov as the poster child for all that is wrong with the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP): unreformed, unrepentant, and tainted by corruption. While often demonized by his opponents, Petkov is not the one-dimensional character he is sometimes made out to be; whether out of conviction or convenience, he is clearly on the side of reformist Prime Minister Sergei Stanishev. On the foreign policy issues we care most about -- GWOT, Iraq, stationing of U.S. forces -- he has used his influence as Deputy Party Chairman to move the BSP in our direction. Not surprisingly, since he has only been in office five months, the jury is still out on his performance as Interior Minister. If his private comments and public statements are to be believed, he is serious about rooting out corruption in his ministry and bringing criminals to justice. The results to date have been mixed, however, and Petkov needs to be pushed hard to put more of Bulgaria's most notorious organized crime figures where they belong: behind bars. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) As head of the Ministry of Interior (MOI) Petkov oversees all of Bulgaria's law enforcement agencies, as well as the National Security Service (NSS), whose principal responsibility is domestic counter-intelligence. He will be accompanied on his visit to the United States by Deputy Interior Minister Boiko Kotsev, Interior Ministry General Secretary Ilia Iliev, and NSS Director Ivan Chobanov.

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13. (C) Much of the country's success in implementing effective rule of law depends on Petkov's personal resolve to tackle organized crime. To date, his tenure at the Interior Ministry has not seen significant progress on this front. The five largest organized crime groups in Bulgaria (TIM, VIS, SIC, Nove Holding, and Multigroup) are household names and generally operate with impunity. Over 30 people have been killed in recent years in gangland-style shootings linked to organized crime, none of which have been solved. During the same time period, only two high-profile OC leaders (the Marinov brothers, linked to SIC) have actually been detained. The MOI has made little progress in its investigation into the murder of businessman Emil Kyulev, which rocked the Bulgarian political establishment in October (Ref. A). Nove Holding, lead by Vasil Bozhkov (aka, "The Skull") and TIM, led by Tihomir Mitev and Ivo Georgiev, are the two groups that have been largely untouched by recent killings and arrests, leading many to believe that they enjoy at least tacit support at high levels of the GOB.

WHAT WE WANT

14. (C) Petkov and his deputies have been prepared for a tough message on organized crime, and we should press him hard to show results. The imminent appointment of the reform-minded Boris Velchev to replace corrupt and ineffective Chief Prosecutor Nikola Filchev removes an important obstacle to action on this front (Ref. B). Only if Petkov and Velchev succeed in reforming their respective services and tackling vested interests will progress be possible in the fight against organized crime.

15. (S) Cooperation with the U.S. on counter-terrorism and counter-proliferation are handled by Petkov through the NSS. Agencies at post report that cooperation with the NSS has improved under Petkov's leadership and that he has taken

steps to professionalize the service and insulate it from political influence and cronyism. We should express our

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appreciation and encourage Petkov to continue working closely with us on these issues.

POTENTIAL AGREEMENTS

¶6. (C) Petkov and other MOI officials have repeatedly stressed to us their desire to execute a formal bilateral agreement on exchange of law enforcement information (Ref. B). We expect them to raise this issue in Washington as well. Under Bulgarian law, legal and investigative records are considered classified, and cannot be exchanged with another government without a formal agreement. In practice, Bulgarian law enforcement contacts have generally provided information anyway, but continually worry that they are in technical violation of their own law. Post generally supports the idea of an MOU on this issue to facilitate cooperation and allay Bulgarian concerns, but has not been able to settle on a text that will be acceptable to both Washington counterparts and the GOB.

¶7. (U) Another bilateral legal instrument currently under consideration is an update of the extradition treaty between the U.S. and Bulgaria, which was last amended in the 1930s. This proposal has the strong support of U.S. law enforcement agencies as well as the GOB. C-175 negotiation authority has currently passed the inter-agency clearance process, and is awaiting final approval from the Department. If final approval is obtained in time for Petkov's visit, a public announcement of the initiation of negotiations could be seen as a potential deliverable for both sides. A bilateral agreement on WMD-related assistance has also been under discussion for several years but significant obstacles remain in the negotiation of a mutually acceptable text.

¶8. (U) Less controversial is the INL implementing arrangement expected to be signed between Minister Petkov and INL Asst. Secretary Patterson during the visit. This document is an

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amendment to the LOA between the GOB and INL signed last year, and spells out the terms of U.S.-funded law enforcement developmental assistance to Bulgaria.

Politics and Personality

¶9. (S) Petkov is perhaps best described as a political operator who has proven his pragmatism and is motivated by success rather than ideology. While strongly supporting the policies of moderate BSP leaders such as President Parvanov and Prime Minister Stanishev, he also maintains working relationships with political forces as diverse as right-wing Sofia Mayor Boiko Borissov, leaders of the ethnic-Turkish MRF party, and the BSP's "hard left," including representatives of communist-era security services. Petkov's ties to the BSP's old guard resulted in political embarrassment in September 2005, when he was forced to abandon plans to appoint high-ranking former members of the communist-era intelligence service and political police to an MOI "Citizen's Advisory Council" (Refs. C & D).

10 (S) Petkov's role as campaign manager and "bag man" for the BSP's last three national campaigns has inevitably resulted in accusations of corruption and links to organized crime; however his modest lifestyle suggests these associations may have been for party, rather than personal gain. As the mayor of the central Bulgarian city of Pleven during the mid-1990s, Petkov was dogged by scandals, some serious and some -- like his late night arrest for urinating in a public fountain -- simply illustrative of his unpolished style. Like the president and prime minister, Petkov understands that Bulgaria must show progress on rule of law in order to enter the EU in 2007. However, past associations with controversial figures may make it difficult for him to

move against certain OC interests. Petkov has also long been publicly associated with Russians who are either directly or indirectly affiliated with Russian intelligence.

¶11. (C) In sharp contrast to the statesmanlike style of President Parvanov and the reformist enthusiasm of PM

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Stanishev, Petkov is well known for his hard-working, hard-drinking approach to politics. Though this controversial image may prevent Petkov from aspiring to higher office, it has not hurt his popularity: polls consistently show him to be among the popular politicians in the country.

Petkov and the MOI

¶12. (C) Despite post's concerns about the MOI's effectiveness against OC and corruption, all agencies at post report excellent cooperation with Petkov and the MOI on law enforcement, intelligence and embassy security. In recent years, U.S.-funded programs have provided significant assistance to the MOI, particularly aimed at enhancing the technical and investigative capabilities of Bulgarian law enforcement. On February 7, the Ambassador and Petkov held a joint press conference to mark the donation of two advanced bomb-disposal robots to the MOI. The Minister is playing a key role in Bulgaria's hosting of the 2006 NATO Ministerial and the 2006 International Association of Chiefs of Police Conference.

¶13. (C) In contrast to previous Interior Ministers, however, Petkov has told us privately that the Ministry of Interior's main problem is not lack of resources. He has emphasized his concern that many MOI officers at all levels are "working on the other side" on behalf of corrupt interests, and has argued that the ministry should first clean house before turning to foreign donors to solve its problems. Petkov's plan to fire hundreds of corrupt police officers was derailed following the Kyulev murder, but he has continued to push for major reform of the ministry. He has thrown his weight behind proposals to radically revise the MOI's structure, including consolidating the country's numerous police services under a single hierarchy and abandoning communist-era military titles for MOI officials in favor of a civilian ranking system. The draft MOI Act favored by Petkov would also greatly diminish the role of the ministry's general secretary, centralizing control of law enforcement agencies in the interior minister's hands.

COMMENT

¶14. (C) Petkov is a pragmatist. He understands that Bulgaria's interests, as well as his own, lie in rapid integration into Europe and a strong bilateral relationship with the U.S. Despite his checkered past, he is our prime contact on counter-terrorism, counter-proliferation and law enforcement. He should be praised for his cooperation in the first two areas and pushed to show results in the last. END COMMENT.

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